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ABSTRACT

This study examined learners' productive competence in collocations and idioms by means of their performance on two interdependent tasks. Participants were two groups of English as a Foreign Language undergraduate and graduate students from the English department at Jordan's Yarmouk University. The two tasks included the following: a multiple choice task of 16 randomly selected Arabic idioms and collocations of the verb "kasura" (broke), which was designed to reveal learners' ability to recognize the correct collocants from among four distractors, and a translation task of the same idiomatic expressions and collocations intended to explore learners' proficiency in this linguistic area. Data analysis indicated that the overall performance of students in the target idiomatic expressions and collocations was far from satisfactory considering that they were high level English majors. Only half of the students' attempts on the objective recognition task were correct, and only 16.61 percent of students total attempts with the translation task were correct. Participants used 11 distinct communication strategies when rendering into English the collocations and idiomatic expressions (e.g., avoidance, false collocation, overgeneralization, derivativeness, verbosity, and idiomacity). (Contains 46 references.) (SM)

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Collocational Competence of Arabic Speaking Learners of English: A Study in Lexical Semantics

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Introduction and Review of the Literature

In an earlier article on lexical choice, the writer (Zughoul 1991) re-iterated the view that the study of the lexicon which can be classified under interlanguage semantics has not received as much emphasis as the other two components of interlanguage ;namely, phonology and syntax in language learning/teaching research. There is no doubt that both phonology and syntax lend themselves easier to rigorous analysis within the different frames of linguistic analysis be they traditionalists, structuralists or transformational-generativists. In the field of language learning/teaching in particular, it has been suggested (cf. Ramsey 1981) that the lack of research on the lexicon is due to the fact that language teaching specialists and syllabus makers have been under the influence of audiolingualism which generally relegates the lexicon to secondary status in comparison to phonology and syntax. Fries (1945) is often quoted for claiming that "a person has learned a foreign language when he has first within a limited vocabulary, mastered the sound system and has, second, had his structural devices matters of automatic habit". Work on frequency counts was started in the work of Fries and Traver and it was peimarily intended to provide the "limited vocabulary for the learner to "master the sound system and make the structural devices matters of automatic habit" Several such word lists were drawn for English and particularly for EFL/ESL instruction in order for such words to be incorporated in English syllabuses for they were judged to be relatively frequent. Such counts included those of Thorndike and Lorge 1944, West 1959, Frances 1966, Kucera and Frances 1967, Carrol et al 1972.

The development of word lists based on frequency counts for English directed the attention of teachers, ELT practitioners and curriculum specialists alike to the upper ends of these lists to the neglect of the lower ends on the premise that mastering the upper ends would be adequate for the development of a good measure of proficiency in the language and the upper end can efficiently exploited for the service of learning the phonology and syntax of the language. This view of vocabulary, beside its notional inaccuracy from a statistical point of view as will be shown in the next section, has led to learners' lexical deficiency and incapability to function in real life situations. Judd (!978) rightly states that "upon leaving the sheltered atmosphere of the classroom, students often find themselves at a literal loss for words in the uncontrolled English speaking environment which they encounter in the normal American university. He suggests that more emphasis should be given to direct vocabulary teaching. This view is strongly supported by Wilkins (1972) who firmly assert that "... there is not much value either in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one has not got the vocabulary that is needed to convey what one wishes to say. One is literally 'at a loss of words" Verstrratan (1992) strongly calls for learning a great many lexical element by heart and second language learners have to acquire the ability to use fixed phrases. Using such phrases is a good indicator of language proficiency.

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Work in the area of corpus linguistics has convincingly shown the urge for a reconsideration of the role of vocabulary in ESL/EFL instruction. It has shown beyond doubt that language pedagogues have been on the wrong in their assumptions regarding frequency in the case of vocabulary. The idea of frequency distribution, Twadell (1973) has mistakenly created the notion of a bell shaped normal distribution for the lexis in English. i.e. , a few high frequency words, a large number of medium frequency words and a few low frequency words. The curve of vocabulary frequency distribution is not so; it is skewed: a few very high frequency words, a small number of medium frequency words, and a very large number of very low frequency wors. The upper end of the scale is really important, but much more important for the development of communicative competence in a foreign language is a reasonable command of the lower end of the scale. Twadell's examples from the work of Kucera and Francis (1967) in the Brown corpus are revealing. The word the which is the most frequent word in the English language has a frequency of 69,970 and occurs every fifteen words of text; the tenth most frequent word be occurs once every 9,568 words of text, and the 2000th word guess occurs once every 18.111 words of text. It is the lower end of the lists of frequency counts, then, that has the pivotal role of the development of communicative competence.

Interlanguage analysis studies of lexis have been conducted on learners of English from various backgrounds and their findings have been similar to a far extent. In her classic study, Duskova (1969) concludes that lexical errors form less homogenous material for study than syntactic errors. And she established a typology of lexical errors deriving from formal similarity, relatedness of meaning assumed equivalence and distortion. This limited taxonomy was adopted in several other studies includin those of Ghadessy (1976) on Persian learners of English, and Al-Ani (1979) on Arab students. Reference should also be made to Arabski (1979) who attempted on a large scale study a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the lexical errors of Polish learners in a large corpus as indications of the development of interlanguage. Referring to the study of Levenston and Blum (1976) in which they investigated a suggested set of some universal principles of simplification, Arabski concluded by providing a typology of lexical errors consisting of eight categories including use of Polish words, morphological similarity, graphic similarity, hyponymy, primary counterpart coinage, semantic similarity and others.

The specific area of collocation within lexis is of particular importance and forms a particular problem for language learners. Abu Ssaydeh (1991) rightly maintains that "the claim that the major problems the learner frequently encounters are predominantly lexical rather than grammatical is probably nowhere apparent and valid than in the area of collocation, the generation of collocably compatible strings in a foreign language has always plagued even advanced learners". Wardell (1991) pointed out that one peculiarity of the English of second language learners is the failure of these learners to produce collocations in the proper order. These forms do not follow a prescribed pattern, not rule governed and while native speakers learn them throughout the normal acquisition process, foreign language learners have to train in order to produce these collocations in the proper context. Fluency in the foreign language, as implied by Kjellemer (1992), is determined by "automation of collocation" and the more the learner is capable of producing the correct collocations the less hesitation pauses he makes in long sequences of words and consequently the more competent in the language he becomes.

Collocations: Definition in the Literature

The definition of a collocation is not seriously a matter of controversy. The idea of what a collocation is involves much more agreement among linguists than disagreement. The British linguist, Firth, is often quoted as one of the earliest who treated collocations. He according to Palmer (1976:94) argued that "You shall know a word by the company it keeps" and he gave the example of the company of the English word *ass* which occurred in a limited set of contexts ("you silly _____", Don't be such an _____.") and in the company of a limited set of adjectives *silly, obstinate, stupid*, and *awful*. In an article on modes of meaning published back in 1951, Firth introduced his often quoted definition of collocation as "the company words keep together". He maintains that "meaning by collocation is an abstraction at the syntagmatic level and is not directly concerned with the conceptual or idea approach to the meaning of words.". He gives the example of the word *night* where one of its meanings involves its collocability with *dark*. In discussing seven differentiated types of meaning, Leech (1974:20) discusses what he calls "collocative meaning" which "consists of the associations a word acquires on account of the meaning of words which tend to occur in its environment" This definition is almost a replica of Firth's definition and instead of *ass*, Leech gives the examples of *pretty* and *handsome* and the collocates of each. The words pretty and handsome share the common grounds of "good looking", but they are distinguished by the range of nouns with which they are likely to co-occur. He also gives the example of "quasi-synonymous" verbs like *wander-stroll*, and *tremble-quiver*, where each keeps a different company from the other. Benson, Benson and Ilson (1986) try to develop criteria for defining collocations. They proposed the dual criteria of relative fixedness and non-idiomaticity and they use recurrent combination and fixed combinations for collocations.

Cruse (1986) offers a more comprehensive, exclusive and formal definition of collocation and develops criteria to answer the questions raised concerning rigorous differentiation between collocations on one hand and idioms on the other. The term Collocations, according to Cruse refer to "sequences of lexical items which habitually co-occur, but which are nonetheless fully transparent in the sense that each lexical constituent is also a semantic constituent. Moreover, collocations have a kind of "semantic cohesion" where the constituent elements are mutually selective. For example, the word heavy in heavy drinker, heavy drug user, heavy on petrol has a defined contextual environment which requires the selection of the notion of "consumption" in the immediate environment. Such expressions as (to pick a semantic area at random) *fine weather, torrential rain, light drizzle, high winds* are examples of collocations. An idiom on the other hand is defined by referring to two requirements; It be lexically complex – i.e. consisting of more than one lexical constituent and , second, being a single minimal semantic constituent. A minimal semantic constituent is indivisible into semantic constituents. Expressions such *as to pull someone's leg, to have a bee in one's bonnet, to kick the bucket, to cook someone's goose, to be off one's rocker, round the bend* and *up the creek* are examples of idioms. Traditionally, the main criterion for defining an idiom is the fact that its meaning cannot be inferred from the meaning of its parts. Sometimes, there are "transitional areas" where collocations border on idioms. The example of the two

bound (constituents do not like to be separated) collocations *foot the bill* and *curry favors* is a case in point. The two expressions are semantically transparent, but un-idiom like because *bill* is freely modifiable in expressions like *the electricity bill* and *the bloody bills*. A distinctly idiom like characteristic however is that foot requires the presence of a specific lexical partner and it resists interruption.

It should be pointed out here that as Zughoul (1991) points out, different languages have different collocation modes; what collocates in one language does not necessarily collocate in another language. Moreover, some collocations may sound odd and out of place when translated . If we take the collocates false teeth, false beard when translated into Arabic the Arabic equivalent implies "lying" and relates the meaning of the adjective false to the verb to lie.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Learner's productive competence in collocations and idioms was elicited by means of their performance on two interdependent tasks. A multiple choice task of 16 randomly selected Arabic idioms and collocations of the verb kasara 'broke' was designed to reveal the learners' ability to recognize the correct collocants from among four distractors, and another task, a translation of the same idiomatic expressions and collocations (see appendix 1) was also administered to explore the learners' proficiency in this linguistic area. The translation task was executed before the recognition task. The target items were validated by a jury of specialists, and the reliability co-efficient of the recognition task was computed by a test-retest procedure and found to be .80.

The two tasks were given to two groups of 70 EFL students (38 graduates and 32 undergraduates) studying at the English department, Yarmouk University. The items are familiar in Jordanian Arabic.

The responses of the subjects on each task were tallied and analyzed. The deviant responses were analyzed in terms of hypothetical hunches made by the researchers, leading to the identification of the learner's communicative strategies in their endeavor to convey the target idiomatic expressions and collocations from Arabic to English.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

Task 1, a controlled lexical one, was meant to elicit the learners' receptive competence in recognizing the correct English collocations equivalent to those of the Arabic verb Kasara 'broke'. Task 2, a translation of the same Arabic collocations, is intended to explore the learners' productive proficiency in this linguistic phenomenon. Both tasks are viewed as complementary indicators of the learners' overall competence in the TL.

Data analysis reveals that the overall performance of the subjects in the target idiomatic expressions and collocations is far from being satisfactory, given that even the undergraduate group are fourth year English language majors. As indicated in Table 2, only 50.8% of the total attempted of all subjects on the objective, recognition task were correct, with less correct performance of the undergraduates (42.77% vs. 57.57%). The results on the productive (translation) task were even worse: Only

16.61% of the subjects' total attempts were correct (see Table 1), with a relatively less correct performance by the graduate group (14.47% vs. 18.90%). This unexpected result could be ascribed to the fact that the graduates opted for more paraphrase and circumlocution in their translation (see Table 3), being more proficient in their overall use of the TL.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses

	Undergrads (N=32)		Graduates (N=38)		ALL (N=70)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Correct	110	18.90	90	14.47	200	16.61
Irrelevant	040	06.87	70	11.25	110	09.14
Gr.Total of . Rs.	582		622		1204	

Among the sentences which received the highest number of correct responses were:

1. She broke her husband's oath.
2. When he spoke, he broke the prevailing silence
3. He broke her heart
4. She begged him, but he disappointed her.
5. The enemy was defeated in the battle.

These forms were appeared to be easy for the subjects on the productive task. It is hypothesized that such expressions are more transparent than the others, and recur more frequently in their literature readings.

Furthermore, it's worth noting that 2.14% (see Table 1) of the total data were irrelevant utterances. Irrelevant responses stem from the subjects' wrong interpretation of the target expression due to lack of concentration or carelessness while doing the task. The following responses are irrelevant to the target test iems.

6. He ate all the food.
7. He opened the buffet a while ago.
8. He drank the bitterness of the medicine.
9. She broke her husband's arm
10. He cleaned his illness by water.
11. Because of his insistence, she accepted his offer.

Furthermore, a cursory investigation of Table 2 reveals that both groups manifested lower competence in the production task on most of the target expressions; Only a few items reflected an adverse tendency. Obviously, production tasks provide more difficulty than objective, multiple-choice tasks as subjects have options at their disposal and there is always room for making a hunch. It is plausible that the testees were bewildered by the semantically-related alternatives given for certain items (e.g. 1, 2, 6, 9, 14 and 15; see Appendix), thus narrowing their intuitive selection and distracting them from deciding on the appropriate collocants.

On the other hand, compared to their errors in the production task, the subjects errors in the recognition task provide little speculation about their sources or about he strategies the learners employed in their communication in the TL, as the latter would reveal their unrestricted intuitions about their communication (The error frequencies are cited in Appendix 1 and 2 and will be referred to, as may be appropriate, in the discussion of the communicative strategies categorized below.)

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of Subjects' Correct Responses

	Undergraduates (N=32)				Graduates (N=38)				ALL (N=70)			
	Recog. Task		Prod. Task		Recog. Task		Prod Task		Recog. Task		Prod. Task	
Item	N0.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	N0.	%	No.	%
1.	12	37.5	14	43.7	19	50.0	10	26.3	31	44.2	24	34.2
2.	07	21.8	16	50.0	29	76.3	20	52.6	36	51.4	36	51.4
3.	16	50.0	---	----	26	68.4	----	----	42	60.0	----	----
4	26	81.2	-- -	----	31	81.5	----	----	57	81.4	----	----
5	20	62.5	12	37.5	29	76.3	09	23.6	49	70.0	21	30.0
6	12	37.5	24	75.0	31	81.5	31	81.5	43	61.4	55	78.5
7	06	18.7	01	03.1	14	36.8	----	----	20	28.5	01	01.4
8	08	25.0	----	----	16	42.1	----	----	24	34.2	----	----
9	03	9.38	02	06.2	01	02.6	02	05.2	04	05.7	04	05.5
10	19	59.3	----	----	20	52.6	----	----	39	55.7	----	----
11	18	56.2	----	----	28	73.6	----	----	46	65.4	----	----
12	11	34.3	03	09.3	24	63.1	01	02.6	35	50.0	04	05.5
13	19	59.3	----	----	30	78.9	----	----	49	70.0	----	----
14	07	21.8	09	28.1	05	13.1	08	21	12	17.1	17	24.2
15	31	96.8	25	78.1	31	81.5	26	68.4	62	88.5	51	72.8
16	04	12.5	----	----	16	42.1	----	----	20	28.5	----	----
Total	219	42.7	106	20.7	350	57.5	107	17.6	569	50.8	213	19.0

LEARNER COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES

It is not precisely clear what subjects based their choices on. It's likely that they used various performing strategies in order to accomplish the tasks at hand. They might have relied on their NL or made a conjecture, or lost patience especially when the task was rather difficult. They might have focused on extraneous factors such as the entire sentence was semantically anomalous (cf. Ellis, 1991:164-165). Besides, the subjects may have avoided rendering a response altogether, or given careless rather irrelevant responses, sort of "ad hoc" forms' created merely to fill a perceived gap in their IL vocabulary (Clause and Kasper, 1983). Nonetheless, subjects must have relied on their implicit and explicit knowledge when generating their communicative utterances in the TL. Stated otherwise, they must have drawn on their existing IL, or on what they assumed to be the TL norms.

Data analysis revealed eleven distinct communicative strategies used by the subjects when rendering into English the collocations and idiomatic expressions associated with the Arabic verb kasara 'broke'. These will be categorized as avoidance, literal translation, false collocation, overgeneralization, quasi-morphological similarity, assumed synonymy, derivativeness, verbosity, idiomacity, paraphrase and circumlocution, and finally IL False assumptions. These will be briefly explicated and exemplified below.

1. Avoidance

It is a common observation of researchers that testees often refrain from carrying out certain tasks on the grounds they are perceived as diffficult or time-consuming or when they feel they just have no guts to be tested. In our data, it is not clear whether the subjects' avoidance was due to their IL level or lack of determination and concentration. As evident from Table 3, the subjects avoided giving answers 217 times out of 894 times (61.13%) with the undergraduates having done that more often than the graduates. The researchers preponderate the hunch that this was due to the subjects' impatience and unwillingness to continue a voluntary test for about an hor or so.

2. Literal Translation from NL

This strategy accounts for 11.74% of the subjects errors. Research provides unequivocal evidence of the role of the NL in TL acquisition, Learners could manipulate their NL in their TL production whenever they did not have the necessary knowledge of the relevant TL form to be communicated. However, such manipulation may not necessarily lead to error. Contrary to the claims of the developmental creative constructive hypothesis' (cf. Dulay and Burt, 1972, 1974 an

Table 3: Frequency of Learner Communicative Strategies

Strategy	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. Avoidance	122	28.24	095	20.56	217	24.27
2. Literal Translation	055	12.73	050	10.82	105	11.74
3. False Collocation	030	06.94	018	03.90	048	05.37
4. Overgeneralization	010	02.31	005	01.08	015	01.68
5. Quasi Morph. Similarity	002	00.46	002	00.43	004	00.45
6. Assumed Synonymity	004	00.92	020	04.33	024	02.68
7. Derivativeness	001	00.32	001	00.22	002	00.22
8. Verbosity	004	00.92	015	03.25	019	02.13
9. Idiomacity	009	02.08	016	03.46	025	02.80
10. Paraphrase & Circum.	145	33.56	210	45.45	355	39.71
11. IL Syntactic Assump.	050	11.58	030	06.49	080	08.95

TOTAL	432	100	462	100	849	100

and others) interference is a well-attested phenomenon at all levels of language proficiency (Kellerman, 1979:38). Apparently, not all NL forms will susceptible to transfer; some features will, others will not. Transfer from NL to TL is motivated by three broad factors: the learner's psychological structure, this perception of NL-TL distance, and his actual knowledge of the TL (Ibid: p. 53). Kellerman maintains that interference is the product of the learner's cognitive system, and thus should be conceived of as creative operating at varying levels of consciousness and emanating from a decision-making mechanism.

Kellerman suggests that the notion of markedness-unmarkedness of a polysemous word could be a factor in interference. Homonyms or polysemous words display an array of multifarous collocational paradigms manifesting varying semantic functions. They may form a continuum of semantic differentiations departing from a core meaning to a metaphorical or idiomatic intention. He ascertains that native speaker's intuitions about 'semantic space' in NL can be utilized to predict their judgement of the translatability of morpho-syntactic forms from NL to TL. Put differently, in line with Kellerman's view, a polysemous word like Arabic Kasara 'broke' is more likely to be transferred the closer its meaning is to be core 'unmarked, neutral' meaning which is the most common meaning. For instance, blue should basically refer to colour before depression, jazz, or pornographic material, but all these homonynomous uses should have reference to the core, unmarked use.

Furthermore, Kellerman claims an influential role for the learner's perception of NL-TL distance in interference. He hypothesizes:

In two perceptually closely-related languages, even strongly 'non-core' meanings may be transferred, while in two distantly-related languages perhaps only the 'core' meanings will be transferred. (p.52)

Many of the Arabic break-collocations have equivalents in English. Surprisingly, however,
many subjects failed to produce the equivalent forms, perhaps conceiving them as Arabic-specific. Examples of LI translation are:

12. He broke his opponent's nose.
13. He broke his eye / will.
14. He broke the dining table / the evil.
15. He broke / fragmented himself.
16. He cancelled the trip.
17. He stopped travelling.
18. She broke her husband's arm.

3. False Collocation

Collocation is perceived as part of the lexical meaning: deviant collocation turns the meaning anomalous or non-felicitous. Learner's wrong collocation can be traced to their NL transfer or paraphrase and circumlocution. The data exhibit that an

appreciable ratio of the subjects' errors (5.37%) was incurred by false collocation. Illustrative examples are:

19. He lightened the bitterness of the medicine.
20. He violated / cut / interrupted / distracted / stopped the prevailing silence.
21. He shattered her heart.
22. She flouted her husband's oath.

Unaware of the correct idiomatic English verb collocant with the following object nouns in (19-22), it is likely that the subject resorted to their NL. THey searched for an Arabic verb collocant that would convey the intended message and then translated it into English. Some choices were not successful, however, They added extra connotations. Thus, whereas the formal collocation is inappropriate in (19) and (21), these sentences are exact rendition of the intended message. In (22) flout colours the intended message (i.e. broke his oath). Likewise, the options in (20) are literal translation of the subjects' perception of the verb kasara. The subjects must have interpreted it in the original statement as intahaka, qata9a, qa:ta9a; baddada- all sharing some semantic features of kasara.

4. Overgeneralization and Analogy

Analogy and overgeneralization are communication strategies used by learners' from different language backgrounds. A word may be expanded for a different contextual use in the TL. Overgeneralization which is the extension of the use of a certain TL feature or from to another, rather incorrect use in the TL itself, is characteristic of learner IL. These strategies formed a small ratio (1.68%) of the subjects' total responses. Illustrative examples are:

23. He briefed the evil and went on his way.
24. Rival traders defeated him; so he declared his backcruptcy.
25. He let himself down to his opponent and asked for help.
26. She was ashamed by his gifts and accepted what he wanted.

In (23), the subjects interpreted the idiomn kasara ash.shar as ixtasara ash.shar (lit. shortened / briefed the discussion of the offense), which is an acceptable paraphrase in Arabic, and then by analogy extended the use of the verb 'brief' to collocate with the evil, thus producing a rather funny English utterance. Likewise, in (24) the subjects extended the meaning of kasara in kasara al.9aduw 'defeated the enemy' to kasarahu at.tujjai:r 'traders broke him' and used defeated instead of broke by analogy. In (25), furthermore, the English idiomatic form let him down was overgeneralized as let himself down. Some subjects seem to have interpreted kasara in kasar nafsuh... as let down, meaning 'he lowered himself to this opponent'. They hen overgeneralized this understanding to 'he let himself down' to.... In (26) moreover, the subjects the verb shamed and the adjective ashamed and overgeneralized the latter to replace the former.

5. Quasi-Morphological Similarity

Words with quasi-morphological similarity could tempt learners to make deviant lexical choices in the TL. Duskova (1969) and many other studies of learners from different language backgorunds have identified this strategy. However, it was used on a narrow scale in the data (0.45%). Only two instances were attested.

27. The enemy was retreated in the battle.
28. She asked him several times but he didn't comply.

What is intended by retreated and comply is defeated and reply respectively. In both utterances, the subject's errors seem to have been motivated by the similarity of the morphological construction of these words.

6. Assumed Synonymity

Learners at this level of proficiency in the TL know many snynonymous words. However, complete synonymity in all contexts is not possible. However, due to the nature of the instructional input, they received at school and the impact of bilingual dictionaries FL learners may not be fully conscious of the selectional restrictions' imposed on the use of words. When short of the appropriate collocant, learners look for a synonym or a near synonym, the result is a non-idiomatic, non-felicitrous IL utterance. Recourse to semantic affinity in the translation of a given collocation or idiomn is a common lexical simplification strategy (cf. Gabrys-Biskur, 1990;' Blum and Levenston, 1978; Shaker and Farghal, 1992). False synonymity comprised only (2.68%0 in our data. Some of the chosen words do not collocate well with the following words. Examples from the data are:

29. The enemy was failed/retreated in the battle.
30. The rival traders failed/defeated him
31. He subjugated himself to his opponent and asked for hlep.
32. He spoke and interrupted the prevailing silence.

Obviously, the subjects used the underlined verbs as synonyms of defeated, broke, humbled and broke, erespectively on the assumption that they are semantically equivalent. The result is yielding bewildering or highly amusing utterances. Obviously, false synonymity is triggered by the learners' immature interlangauge.

7. Derivatiness

Zughoul (1991) identified this strategy. Here, learners may ake a TL adjective and derive a verb form from its NL equivalent and then overgeneralize this derivation to the TL form. This strategy is attested twice in the data (0.22%), namely:

33. The rival traders caused him to broke.

It is likely that the subjects here took the Arabic adjective muflis 'penniless' to be equivalent to the English adjective broke, and then derived the infinitive verbal form from the Arabic adjective, viz, 'yuflis' 'to cause to be penniless' and then extended this use by analogy to the English adjective broke, thus producing 'caused him to broke.

8. Verbosity

Verbosity refers to the effect of literary styles on the learners' choices. Subjects' errors here initiate from their recourse to their literary knowledge, from their tendency to select big sounding words under the impression that such words make their TL statement more impressive and literary like (Zughoul, 1991:54). Moreover, some subjects used English words derived from Arabic to the effect that the outcome alters the intended message. This strategy was used in (2.13%) of all testees' responses. Illustrative examples are:

34. She broke her husband's vow.
35. She flouted her husband's oath.
36. He overwhelmed her by his gifts.
37. He pecked at this food.
38. He spoke and shattered silence.
39. He couldn't redeem the car installment.
40. Wickedness has vanished.
41. Evil was shunned.

It is likely that the subjects opted for the underlined words because of their literary ring, influenced by their lierature readings which are bound in such words. The underlying here is the fact that the subjects are not aware of the full range of the semantic distribution of these terms, assuming they are equivalent to their Arabic counterparts in (34-35) the respondents assumed a full semantic equivalence between yami:n 'oath' and vow, and between kasara and flouted. Obviously, there is some semantic overlapping between these pairs in the TL, but it does not warrant complete synonymity.

In (36-38), the verbs overwhelmed, pecked at, and shattered are taken by some subjects to be a representative paraphrase of the Arabic kasara in kasar 9e:nha: 'put her to shame', kasar as.sufrah 'broke fast', and kasar as.samt 'broke silence'. Plausibly, some subjects took the dictionary meaning of overwhelmed 'defeated' or 'made powerless' to be equivalent to the first expression, despite the additional psychological weakness in her behaviour which is implied by the Arabic expression. In (37) the verb pecked at is used metaphorically meaning 'ate a little like birds'. It's likely that some subjects interpreted the Arabic form as 'just ate a little', an implied meaning - though vaguely - and then extended this meaning to English, expressing it metaphorically to convey a more impressive meaning. Nevertheless, the English sentence missed the intentional value of the original Arabic expression. In (38), additionally, the subjects who used shattered instead of broke seem to have been influenced by the former's literary ring although it does not meet the collocational constraints of the given context. The same conjecture could account for the learners' choice of redeem in the sense of inkasar qist a.s.saya:rah 'the car installment is overdue', and vanished and shunned in the sense of inkasar ash.shar 'Nothing is the matter'.

9. Idiomacity

Some of the target tasks are idioms. Idioms are not easy targets for translation as learners recognize that they are marked systems within the NL and the TL, and that their meaning may not be decoded by syntactic analysis. The strategy of idiomacity is

rooted in the learner's translation attempts. Unaware of the NL-TL equivalent idiomatic expressions, learners are tempted to contrive idiomatic forms in the TL parallel to those of the NL. The resultant utterance is often deviant or anomalous. Idiomacity accounted for 2.80% of the subjects' total attempts in this study. Examples are:

42. He brought him down to his kneels.
43. He pinned him down.
44. He brought down his opponent.
45. He let her down.
46. It's O.K. It's over.
47. What's bygone is bygone.

The subjects' unsuccessful tendency to invent idiomatic expressions in English parallel to those of Arabic is quite evident in the above examples. In (42-44) the subjects interpreted kasar ?anfuh 'humiliate him' as forced or controlled him and hence searched in their TL lexicon for equivalent idiomatic expressions. In their attempt to achieve idiomacity, subjects missed the intended message. Sentence (45) just missed the psychological, sentimental features associated with the Arabic form kasar bixa:Tirha:. Sentences (46-47) are conspicious exponents of the learners' effect to produce parallel idioms in the TL. Sentence (47) however, was reported by one subject. It is an alteration of the informal idiom 'Let bygones be gygones' suggesting (to forget and forgive/ the bad things isn the past - see Longman Dictionary of American English). This subject came up with this idiom as equivalent to inkasar ash.shar. It's true that both imply forgiveness, but unlike English, Arabic assigns this idiom a present time reference, not to mention its anomaly in English.

10. Paraphrase and Circumlocution

Whern leaners fail to translate idiomatically because of the deficiency in their lexicon, they often resort to paraphrase and circumlocution to convey the intended message. Some paraphrase is economical, and some is verbiage. More often than not, learners miss certain semantic aspects of the message or produce loose sentences which sound non-felicitous by the TL norms. This was the most strategy employed our data (39.71%) almost equally by graduates and undergraduates (see Table 3). Illustrative examples area (along with reference to the number of the target sentences in Appendix 1):

48. She disobeyed her husband's order. (1)
49. He stepped on his dignity and asked help from his opponent (12
50. He avoided the trouble and went on his way. (8)
51. He ate a minute ago. (7)
52. She begged him but he refused her request. (5)
53. He couldn't pay the bill of the car. (11)
54. The rival traders made him lose his money. (14)
55. He made the taste of the medicine better. (9)

11. IL Errors

Both undergraduates and graduates still make lexical and syntactic errors (8.95%0. As evident in Table 3, such errors are not likely to be persistent: graduates demonstrated far better progress on the same translation task (11.58% vs. 6.49%). One would hypothesize that such errors as the enemy defeated in the battle or she broked his oath were triggered out of carelessness had not it been the case that a good number of subjects iterated the same error. Such errors could be attributed to lack of learning at both receptive and productive levels, at school and at the university. Some lexical errors may have been caused by false assumptions leading to false substitutions, such as :

56. The enemy was failed (defeated) in the battle.
57. He succeeded (avoided) the offense.
58. The tradesmen made him broken.
59. He tolerated (broke) the unsweet taste of the medicine.

Conclusion

Arab learners of English, even at advanced levels, still have problems with English collocations and idioms. The competence of seventy undergraduates and graduate English major students was explored on 16 kasar 'break' collocations. The students' overall proficiency in this linguistic area was found as inadequate. The study aimed at probing any discrepancy in the learners' competence on the set tasks according to their academic levels. It also investigated the communicative strategies employed by the learners when attempting translation from NL to TL. Eleven such strategies were identified, exermplified and, described. On the whole, the study has subscribed to the role of NL in the FL acquisition, suggesting that NL transfer is a creative cognitive process.

Appendix 1

Circle the best right choice:

1.She _____ her husband's oath and went out.
a. broke b. cracked c. put down d. threw away

2. The leader spoke, _____ the prevailing silence.
a. moving b. damaging c. breaking d. smashing

3. He _____, forcing him to give in to what he wanted.
a. pulled his opponent's nose b. blew up his opponen't nose.
c. broke his opponent's nose d. humiliated his opponent

4. He _____ with his gifts until she succumbed to his desire.
a. wounded her eye b. put her to shame
c. broke into her eye d. hit her eye

5. She pleased with him but he _____
a. disappointed her. b. hurt her feelings.
c. refused herself d. broke her soul.

6. I _____ a moment ago.
a. broke the fast b. stopped eating
c. filled myself d. damaged the dining table.

7. He betrayed her love and _____ her heart.
a. cracked b. cut c. broke d. bled

8.He went on his way, not wanting to _____ trouble..
a. break up b. cut short c. stir up d. raise

9. He _____ the bitterness of the medicine with water.
a. reduced b. diluted c. fixed d. broke

10 She _____ insulting him on every occasion.
a. broke on b. ventured on c. burst on d. got used to

11. The car installment is _____ on him.
a. overdue b. fractioned c. broken d. fragmented

12. He _____ himself and asked for his rival's help.
a. humbled b. shamed c. broke c. cracked

13. After the fighting, he _____ to that coffee shop
a. broke his leg so as not to go b. He bound his legs so as not to go
c. refrained from going d. twisted his foot so as not to go

14.The irrevocable debts _____ so he declared bankruptcy.
a. cut b. broke c. crushed d. overburdened

15. The enemy _____ in the battle.
a. was broken b. was defeated c. retreated d. refracted

16 a. Nothing is the matter. b. The good has smashed the evil.
c. Evil has shattered apart. c. Good happened; evil broken.

17. The enemy's _____
a. fork has been broken b. thorn has been pulled out.
c. power has been eliminatedd. thorn has been shattered.

18. His death _____ the army's spirits.
a. uprooted b. distracted c. cut down d. broke

19. He _____ his thirst with cold juice.
a. broke b. quenched c. smashed d. wetted

20. Some workers _____ the strike.
a. violated b. cutt off c. broke d. bit

Appendix 2: Response Frequency

#/	Ch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	a.	19	6	3	3	29	3	14	2	20	1	28	24	2	2	--	16
	b.	--	1	1	31	4	--	14	--	12	7	2	4	--	4	31	2
	c.	13	29	7	2	1	31	4	16	1	4	2	2	30	1	--	6
	d.	4	1	26	--	3	3	5	17	1	20	1	3	1	23	1	6
		2	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	3	6	5	5	5	8	6	8
	a.	12	13	4	2	20	5	6	6	22	3	18	11	4	1	--	4
	b.	2	3	6	26	8	--	13	3	6	5	7	10	6	7	31	12
	c.	7	7	3	1	1	12	4	8	3	4	3	2	19	10	--	2
	d.	8	8	16	2	2	14	7	14	3	19	7	9	2	13	1	11
	--	3	1	3	1	1	--	2	1	--	1	--	--	1	1	--	3

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